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KCH

Two Races

They Occurred on the Corso at Rome.

By F. A. MITCHEL

One of the principal streets, if not the prin ipal street, in Rome is the Corso, so called from the fact that formerly it was used for racing horses. Gradually it was built upon and finally abandoned as a track and paved. But the citizens of medieval Rome were wont to assemble there, occupying stands erected there for the purpose of seeing the thoroughbreds run.

One afternoon a party of ladies and gentlemen occupied seats on one of these stands, among whom was a young lady noted for her kindliness of disposition, as well as beauty. Binnea Cellini had just come to a marriageable age-much younger in Italy than in colder climates, especially in those days. Among her admirers were two young men, Edgardo Brandini and Roberto Carancola.

Brandini was a scholarly person, though manly and fond of athletic Carancola was a descendant of the Medici family, which at an earlier date had been very powerful and some of them steeped in crime. Both these young men were to ride their own horses in the race about to take place on the Corso, and the principal betting was on one or the other of their animals.

It being known that Bianca Cellini was receiving the attentions of these two principal participants in the race, a great deal of curiosity was aroused among her friends as to which one she would prefer to win. Yet so guileless was her face, and withal so devoid of any expression of approbation of either, that it did not seem probable she could have a preference. At races every one bets, and two of her friends made a bet that before she left the Corso she would show her feelings either for Edgardo Brandini or Ro-

When the riders dashed by, Brandini in the lead, it was hoped by these two betting men that she would give some sign by which their bet might be decided. But if there was any pleasurable excitement in seeing Brandini in the lead or Carancola behind, there was not sufficient evidence of either to warrant a decision.

When the race was finished Brandini was the winner, Carancola coming in third. Carancola was riding sullenly back past the stand where Blanca Cellini was seated. She called to him to join her party that she might in the kindness of her heart soothe his wounded feelings at his defeat. Dismounting he went to her and the sympathy he saw in her face took away something of his disappointment. But in another moment Brandini rode by, receiving the acclamations of the people as the victor. Bianca, turning from Roberto, waved to Edgardo, showing every evidence that she gloried in his triumph.

Now, this was quite enough irritating to Carancola without what followed. The man who had bet that Bianca would show a preference for Brandini said in a voice loud enough to be heard. "I've won." The other said nothing, but it was evident that he assented. Carancola flashed a quick glance at them and understood what the bet was about without being told.

There was that in this sudden transition from sympathy for him to delight at the success of his rival, to say nothing of the attendant incident, that embittered Carancola against the girl as well as the man she favored. It was the beginning of a smoldering fire that grew more malignant as Roberto saw that his rival was every day getting nearer to the possession of the prize he coveted. Then when the betrothal between Edgardo and Bianca was announced it burst forth with all

the bitterness of an angry serpent.

Bianca, who from time to time met with Carancola, was perfectly aware of his feelings toward his rival, though she did not realize that an equal hate toward her was growing up within him. She did all she could to soothe him, always greeting him with a smile and passing his venomous words with-out notice. But Carancola had in him some of the blood of the De' Medici who in a fit of passion had killed two of his own children. He was not to be placated. While she was endeavoring by her sweetness of disposition to neutralize his madness, he was plotting to

vent it upon her as well as her lover. At one end of the Forum stone steps lead up to the capital. Edgardo Brandini was one night ascending these steps when Roberto followed him and. approaching him noiselessly, plunged a stilleto in his back, killing him in-

stantly. When Bianca saw the dead body of her lover for a time her family despaired of her reason. When she came out from the influence of the crushing blow it was believed that she would take the veil. However, weeks passed. then months, while she remained within her home and was seen by no one. Then suddenly she appeared again in the world. But how changed! The dif-ference was not physical. If strick-en bodlly she did not show it. Her face was not pale, her youthful beauty had not been impaired, but the Madonns-like expression in her face was gone, and in its place—se said those who

There was no evidence as to who had killed Brandini, though every effort was made to discover his murderer. Only one person knew with certainty who had stabbed him, and that was his betrothed. But she never breathed a suspicion. Had she done so it would have availed nothing, for in those days the science of obtaining evidence against criminals was not what it is today. Besides, at that time law was lax and persons were inclined to take their differences with their neighbors into their own hands.

Carancola supposed that even if Bi-anca did not denounce him she would treat him as her lover's murderer. What was his surprise then when on their first meeting after the murder she seemed to incline herself to him for sympathy. His heart leaped with a sudden hope. Could it be that in her innocence she did not lay the crime at his door? Would it be possible after all to win her? He spoke kindly to her, and his words and manner appeared to give her comfort. He did not see that strange look in her eye which her friends had noticed, or if he did he did not attempt to interpret it. What he looked for was a reliance on him for comfort that might develop into love. Her own manner was altered. He seemed to regret his former harsh words. Indeed, he told her that they had been caused solely by the fact that he had no hope of possessing her.

Bianca seemed, too, to crave to replace that love of which she had been deprived. At least this was the view Roberto took of her bearing toward him. At, first he was chary of his visits to her, but increased their frequeney. She, too, showed a warmer welcome every time he came. One thing, however, he noticed that puzzled him. She did not spend long hours with him. Sometimes she excused herself after a short time with him by saying that she was unavoidably called away to some duty. Sometimes she pleaded indisposition and did not receive him at all.

A time came when Bianca appeared again in the gay world. Her gentle bearing was replaced by an apparent recklessness. From a modest maiden she seemed to have passed to a woman of the world. That was a time when the higher classes were profligate. Bianca mingled with the gayeties, but was not herself dissipated. She accepted no marked attention from any man except Carancola. Some who knew of the rivalry that had existed between him and Brandini were surprised that she would be satisfied with the one in place of the other, and a few who suspected Carancola of having put his rival out of his way turned against her, but the general opinion was that she had been undecided between the two and, having lost the one,

was ready to accept the other. A year from the death of Edgardo Brandini came round and brought again the races on the Corso. Bianca had told him, out of respect to opin ion, that she would not accept him till the twelve months after her bereavement had passed. He had intended to take no part in the races in deference to her feelings, her former lover having taken a conspicuous part in them the year before, but she urged him to do so. Anything she wished was a command to him, and he was glad to obey this one, for a colt that he had been raising had come of a proper age to run and was sure to win.

Carancola on the eve of the race was in high spirits. He was about to be betrothed to the girl he had so long loved, and since he alone knew of the merits of his horse was enabled to put out numerous bets with odds in his favor. If there was a gnawing of conscience within him he did not show it. He was busy making his preparations and saw but little of his betrothed.

concours was assembling on the Corso, and men were discussing the relative merits of the horses and making their bets. The stands were filling up, and among the parties occupying the seats was one including Bianca Cellini. As admirers looked up at her from below they saw a different person from the one who had been in her place a year before. Her beauty had bloomed, but instead of the soft cheek, the childlike brow, there was that look which no one could understand. In her corsage was a single rose, which would have been more in keeping with the girl of a year before

Bianca had told Roberto to come to her immediately before he started in the race. He did so, and with a smile she handed him the rose from her belt and said:

"Before the signal to go, inhale its fragrance, and I promise you it will win you the race."

Promising to do so, he left her and within a few minutes after breathing in the odor of her gift was madly tearing down the Corso with the other

Something occurred near the goal. An accident, some said. Whatever it was, it threw a chill over the coneourse. Presently a horseman came back and, riding up to the stand where Bianca sat, told her that Roberto Car-ancola had fallen from his horse just before making the goal far in adv of all other competitors and had been killed.

There was a relaxation of that strange look on Bianca's face, and in its place came the marks of the great grief which had settled there after the death of Edgardo Brandini. From the Corso she retired to a convent, which

A friend of Bianca's, who was near Carancola when he fell, took a rose from his body which he had worn in the race and noticed a peculiar odor in the flower. Taking it home with him, he had it analyzed by a chemist. It had been sprinkled with a deadly

knew her most intimately—had come a strange, faraway look that they could not fathom. Weeder

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